

1-1-2005

OT 520 Old Testament Introduction

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Document

OT520XLFA05

Name: OT520XLFA05

Subject: Boda

Category:

Abstract:

Keywords: **OT 520XL Old Testament Introduction**

Fall 2005-3 hours

September 6-December 16, 2005

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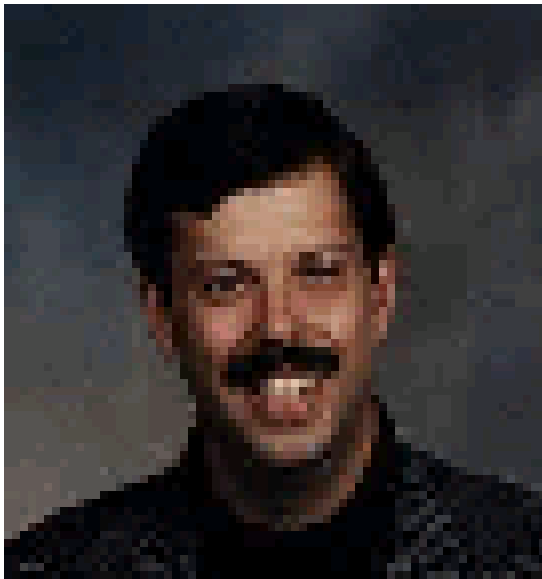
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Welcome!



I'm Mark Boda, your professor and facilitator for the semester. You have arrived at the syllabus page for our class this semester in Old Testament Introduction. This will be our guide throughout the semester so it is very important that we all begin by reading the notes provided below. From here you will be guided through the various learning modules, virtual lectures, and discussion rooms which will facilitate our learning this semester. If you have questions or concerns, just click on the office icon and I will get back to you a.s.a.p. For my life story check out my resume.

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Description

This course lays the foundation for Old Testament study at Asbury by providing a window into the historical, cultural and geographical background, the literary and theological content and the practical relevance of the Old Testament. The goal is to provide the information and tools which will enable the students to experience the text of the Old Testament throughout their

lives through a three dimensional reading. The student will not only grapple with the content of these books and their backgrounds, but also with the methods for interpreting them in a modern context.

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Purpose

·**Think**: To know the historical, cultural, and geographical background, the literary and theological content and the canonical and practical relevance of the Old Testament. To know the various approaches to interpreting the Old Testament.

·**Do**: To demonstrate proficiency in interpreting and applying Old Testament literature.

·**Be**: To embrace the Old Testament as relevant material for today and be moved by their themes to love God and people.

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Resources

Required Books

Dillard, R. B. and Longman, Tremper. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Provan, Iain; Long, V. Philips; and Longman, Tremper. *A Biblical History of Israel*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003.

Tate, W. Randolph. Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach (Revised Edition). Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997.

Library Resources

The required books will not be enough to carry you through this semester. You will need to become acquainted with your local theological and public libraries. At some point in the semester you will need to use a theological library's facilities for your research paper. Asbury can provide some help for your study. You can access some of their resources via the Resource Center in First Class and you can order articles and books from the librarians at the seminary.

Obtaining Library Materials and Reference Assistance

1. **General Questions:** Information_Commons@asburyseminary.edu, or Toll-free 1-866-454-2733

- This is the best place to start when you have questions about library resources. Help is available Monday-Thursday from 8am - 7pm and Friday and Saturday from 8am - 5:45pm. If the people at the Information Commons desk cannot answer your questions, they will direct you to the person or department who can.

2. **Materials Requests:** Library_Loan@asburyseminary.edu, or Toll-free 1-866-454-2733

- ExL Students may request books, photocopies or email attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the library loan office for information on costs and instructions on how to make requests.

- ExL students are also encouraged to make use of local

library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Wilmore campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. **Research Questions:**

Information_Commons@asburyseminary.edu

- Or call the toll-free number and then **Information Commons** x2233.

- ExL students are encouraged to contact Hannah Kirsch (x2189) for advanced research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. **Online Databases:**

- To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id). If you have questions, contact the Information Commons desk.

Especially helpful for your work will be the ATLA Religion database (for journal articles) and the IPreach resource database (for commentaries, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, reference material).

Program of Study

This is an internet course and requires both independent work and group discussion. The resource base will include a series of

lectures which I will provide (virtual lectures), a series of books we will all read together, and our interpretive and collaborative enterprises during the course of the semester. The learning experience is structured in 12 learning modules. Here are some introductory remarks on the basic elements in the course:

·**Discussion Center:** Our discussion throughout the semester will be facilitated in the Discussion Center, found when you first open your course icon, and also through the more intimate Team Folders reserved for smaller groups of learners. We will not be using e-mail to discuss issues, but rather we will post responses and discussion points in threaded discussions (in the Discussion Center and the Team Folders) to which only the class members will have access.

·**Office:** If you would like to speak privately with me as your professor, please click the office icon in our classroom. Most communication should be directed to the main discussion window in First Class so that fellow learners can benefit from your questions or comments. However, if there is a sensitive matter you would like to direct my way, including crises in your life, confusion or concern over my evaluative remarks, or a concern about a fellow learner, feel free to send me a note via the Office icon.

·**Student Lounge:** This is where you can post any notes that are not related to the guided discussion which takes place in the main discussion center or the team rooms. Often this includes prayer requests or just insights into your everyday life or even jokes or more personal sharing. Please provide your prayer requests throughout the semester and when you read one feel free to respond with a digital prayer, prompting each of us to pray in that way as we read it.

·**Virtual lectures:** these lectures seek to orient us as a class to the issue under discussion in the particular learning module. They will be supplemented by reading in the textbooks and will be

followed by questions which will prompt our discussion.

·**Teams:** You have been arbitrarily put into teams for the semester. These teams will work together on two major group projects, one on the history of Israel and the second on the literature of the Old Testament.

·**Independent Work:** Throughout the semester you will write one research paper on a passage you will carry with you throughout the various learning modules (you will be prompted throughout the semester for what to research and the guide for writing it up in research paper format is below).

·**Chat Room:** A chat room is available for anyone who wants to discuss their work in real time. In most circumstances, however, we will not use this facility because of our desire to provide flexibility for your learning. There will be a couple of times during the semester, however, when we will have a Real Time interaction within our Team Folders.

·**Real Audio:** Most of the resources for this course are in written format either in your textbooks or in the collaborative classroom. However, in the first Learning Module you will need to listen to a sermon I preached this year which is available in Real Audio format. You must have Real Audio/Video installed on your computer and you can obtain that by going to the Resource Center folder and then clicking on the Real Audio/Video folder. You should do that a.s.a.p. and if you have any problems please contact the technical support team I have mentioned in this syllabus.

·**Learning Modules:** This course is structured into 12 learning modules each corresponding to a one week period during the semester. 2 of these modules are devoted to the Dimension of Depth (Approach), 3 to the Dimension of Length (History), 5 to the Dimension of Width (Literature), and 2 to the Dimension of Height (Application).

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Communication

Professor

I have provided my phone numbers and you can contact me via the office. I have provided my home phone number because I am making myself available to you even outside my daily work hours. You will notice that my area code is not the same as that of Asbury Seminary. I will be guiding this class from my home in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and the beauty of this new medium of education is that I am as close to you as the professors in Wilmore.

ExL Team

However, there are some other people whose work is often behind the scenes but they are essential to the success of this learning experience.

ExL Contact Information:

For **general questions regarding the ExL program**, contact **Dale Hale** at ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu

For **technical support**, contact **Alex Miller** or **Jared Porter** at ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu

For **library research support**, contact **the Information Commons** at Information_Commons@asburyseminary.edu

For **library loans**, contact **Dot James** at

Library_Loan@asburyseminary.edu

High Tech/High Touch

Throughout the semester as you have things to share, prayer requests, even jokes or stories, please post them into the **Student Lounge** provided. I will keep you updated on my life. At times I will ask someone to pray for us all as we begin the week. To get to know your classmates, just check out their resumes by double clicking on their name on FirstClass.

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Learning Modules: Reading in Three Dimensions

My desire for you this semester is that you will taste the Old Testament again for the very first time. I want this text to jump off the written page as you experience it in three dimensions. My hope is that this will invite and orient you to a lifetime of study in the Old Testament. Our Learning Modules are designed to shape your understanding and skill levels in the various dimensions of the Old Testament. This will mean an overview of the general content of these dimensions for the entire Old Testament, but also focused attention on a particular Old Testament book which we will carry with us throughout the semester. This focused attention will reveal the essential nature of each dimension and the impact the dimension makes on our reading of the Old Testament.

Dimension of Depth: Approach (Sept 6-18)

Sept 6-11: Learning Module #1

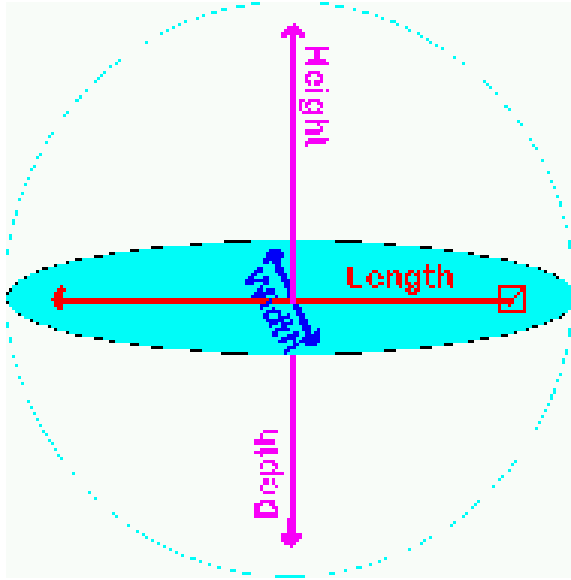
Sept 12-18: Learning Module #2

Dimension of Length: History (Sept 19-Oct 16)

Sept 19-25: Learning Module #3

Sept 26-Oct 2: Learning Module #4

Oct 3-9: Learning Module #5



Oct 10-16: Study Hall--

Research Time

Dimension of Width: Literature (Oct 17-Nov 27)

Oct 17-23: Learning Module #6

Oct 24-30: Learning Module #7

Oct 31-Nov 6: Learning Module #8

Nov 7-13: Learning Module #9

Nov 14-20: Learning Module #10

Nov 21-27: Study Hall--Research Time

Dimension of Height: Application (Nov 28-Dec 16)

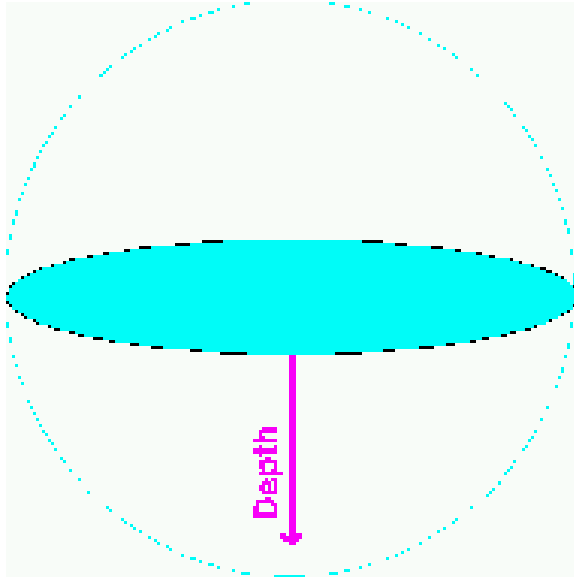
Nov 28-Dec 4: Learning Module #11

Dec 5-11: Learning Module #12

December 12-16: Study Hall--Complete Paper

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Learning Modules #1-2: Sept 6-18



The Dimension of Depth: The Dimension of the Reader (Approach)

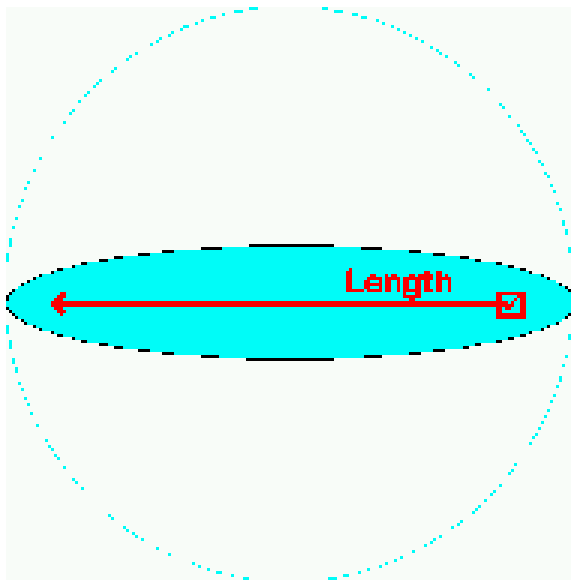
To properly understand any text the interpreter must begin with his or her own perspective. Whether one admits it or not every analysis of a text begins with the interpreters themselves. Every individual brings something to the text and that something ranges from a basic commitment to God and His word, to one's prior experience with the text to finally one's ability to perceive and grasp the truth. As interpretation begins in this world so also it will end here as well. In this section we will investigate core motivations for studying the Old Testament and essential prerequisites for us to do so in the context of the Christian tradition.

Learning Experiences:

Virtual Introductions, Reading in Textbooks and Lectures,
Discussion, Sermon audio

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Learning Modules #3-#5: Sept 19-Oct 16



The Dimension of Length: The Dimension of the Author (History)

By investigating the dimension of length, the dimension of history, we take seriously the large gap between our world and the world in which the text was born. At the same time we must devise strategies to build bridges into that world. This dimension of history takes us into the world of the author and by investigating it we follow Hirsch's advice (1960:478): "the interpreter's primary task is to reproduce in himself the author's 'logic,' his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short his world". In

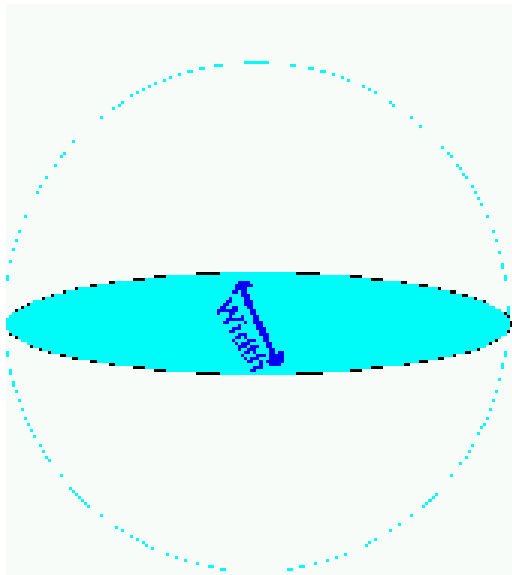
this section, we will offer a general overview of the history, culture, and geography of the Ancient Near East that shaped the Old Testament books and communities. We will also consider several critical methods that have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Historical-Criticism, Archaeology, Source Criticism, Form Criticism)

Learning Experiences:

Reading in Textbooks, Virtual Lectures, Discussion, Team Project and Response, Preliminary Independent work on individual Research Paper

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Learning Modules #6-#10: Oct 17-Nov 27



The Dimension of Width: The Dimension of the Text (Literature)

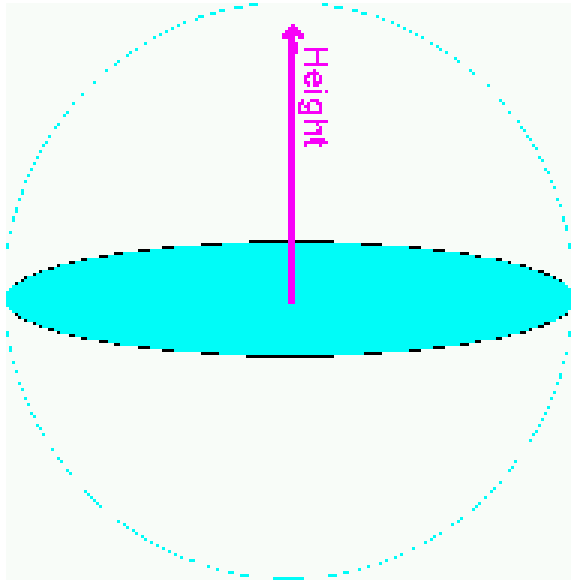
Although biblical passages are borne and honed in particular historical contexts (the Dimension of Length: History), it is important to understand that these passages create literary worlds of their own which are able to transcend their historical and cultural contexts and speak to later generations. In this section we will gain an appreciation for the text of the Old Testament, written in a variety of genres and books and preserved through a long scribal tradition. We will also investigate the methods which have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Text Criticism).

Learning Experiences:

Reading in Textbooks, Virtual Lectures, Discussion, Team Project and Response, Further preliminary work on individual Research Paper

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Learning Module #11-#12: Nov 28-Dec 16



The Dimension of Height: The Dimension of the Reader (Application)

Our journey in interpreting the text began with a focus on the Dimension of Depth: Approach, investigating the perspective of the interpreter, to identify the presuppositions that we bring to the text and to orient ourselves both theologically and intellectually to the text. In this final phase of the journey we return again to the Dimension of Depth/Height to identify the significance of this text for the world in which we live. We are now crossing from exegesis to interpretation as we seek to connect the original meaning of the passage, identified in the Dimensions of Length and Width, to the contemporary significance of the passage today. This final phase consists of two aspects. First, we need to consider the ultimate context of every passage in the canon as a whole. As Christians we realize that Christ has come and that we are living in the "Last Days". We thus read the Old Testament differently than those who did not have the New Testament. Secondly, we will end our semester together by considering the opportunities for connecting the ancient message of the Old Testament in our Twenty-First

Century Context. We will also investigate the methods which have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Postmodern criticism, Ideological Criticism, Feminist Criticism).

Learning Experiences:

Reading in Textbook, Virtual Lectures, Virtual Discussion, Research Paper final draft and evaluation.

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Learning Opportunities

Reading

The textbooks for this course must be read in the entirety by the end of the semester. On the title page of your final paper you will identify what percentage of each of the class textbooks you have read during this semester. Since this is a presupposition of this course a positive mark is not assigned to the reading. However, failure to complete the reading will result in a loss of up to 10% of the course final grade.

Discussions 30%

Our various resources provide orientation and content during our various modules. They are designed to prompt us to discuss and clarify the issues raised. Your participation in this discussion is essential both as an initial contributor as well as a responder to other's contributions. Our discussions will not only take place

with the entire class, but also within smaller groups. I will provide evaluation of your contributions at mid-semester and end of semester.

Format for Discussions: The level of English typically decreases drastically on the Internet and you will have to remind yourself you are in a class environment. Submissions in this class should be written in acceptable English prose style with proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. It is expected that you will use appropriate written communication format with introduction, conclusion and a clear and concise flow of argument. For most of the course you will be submitting your material in the Discussion Center and/or Team Folders.

Hot Tip: The key to a good mark on discussions is---
Consistency (regular interactions rather than all at the last moment)

Relevancy (speak to your classmates' contributions and move the discussion along)

Punctuality (on time according to the schedule)

Team Paper and Evaluation (30%)

At a couple of points in the semester you will work together in your teams to complete a project which will enhance the learning experience of every member of the class. You will contribute to the content of the class and evaluate other teams' work (Team Paper, 20%; Evaluation, 10%). A mark (20%) will be given to your Team Paper, but this may not be your own mark. I will ask for an evaluation of each team member by the members of the team and distribute the marks accordingly. Thus, if one person does twice the work as the others, an 18/20 may end up being 20/20 for

that person and 17/20 for the other two. Your evaluation of your teammates will be done privately to the professor.

Format for Team Papers: Papers should be 2000 words (a range of 1900-2100 will be accepted). I am very sticky about this range because your classmates only have so much time to read. They should be posted to the main discussion room in a message (not attached in file format) so your classmates can highlight elements and ask questions. Of course, you can use all the colors, fonts you wish within First Class.

Hot Tip: I evaluate based on three factors--

Presentation (is it laid out properly? does it use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation? etc.)

Argumentation (does it have an introduction, conclusion, flow of thought? etc.)

Content (does it cover the material required? is it the appropriate length? etc.)

Individual Research Paper (40%)

Near the end of the semester you will complete a major research paper (minimum 15 pages double spaced) on a particular Old Testament passage. In this paper you will provide a three dimensional reading based on the content and methodology discussed throughout the semester. For the format of this paper see the Format section below. Your research on this passage should draw on a minimum of 8 books/articles beyond the textbooks for the class. These books/articles must reflect recent **published** research (after 1950, and best after 1980). *You are not allowed to use internet resources as the basis for your research paper unless you have had the resources approved*

by the professor. This requirement does not include ancient sources used (Josephus, Qumran) or Bibles, Versions, Study Bibles, Bible Dictionaries (or other reference works), but rather elongated treatments of your biblical text or book. This paper will be written in stages throughout the semester. You will choose your passage for this paper in the early learning modules.

Format for Individual Papers: Papers should follow a standard format such as <http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml> While documentation formats for materials appearing on the Internet are not yet fully standardized, there are some attempts at this. Please follow the guidelines put together by [Andrew Harnack and Gene Kleppinger](#).

Papers in this course will be submitted by email to the instructor as an attached file. The preferred file format is RTF (.rtf=rich text format) which is available in most word processing programs. Just "save as" and choose the .rtf option. You may use Word Perfect or Microsoft Word if you have to, but no other programs will work on my computer. If all else fails, contact ExL tech support or the professor.

All material which is submitted should be double spaced with 1" margins utilizing a readable font (10-12 pts). It must have a title page and bibliography which is not included in the length required. It should be written in excellent modern literary English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and rhetoric (including an introduction, conclusion and logical flow of argument). If it helps an outline may accompany the paper but this is not included in the length of the paper. Secondary and Primary sources should be used, cited and footnoted appropriately.

After all your good research on your passage you will need to

present in a way that is user friendly and gets to the heart of the passage. Use this guide below (the percentages are the amount of your paper which should be devoted to each point):

Introduction (2.5%)

1. Basic theme and overall flow of the passage (10%)
2. Basic historical background to the passage and book (20%)
3. How rhetoric (imagery and structure) set within history and culture point to the basic theme (40%). Allow the structure of the passage to structure your discussion which is an integrated piece: go stanza by stanza (Poetry) or scene by scene (Narrative).
4. How this contributes to its particular book (10%)
5. How this relates to the rest of the canon (10%)
6. Application (5%)

Conclusion (2.5%)

Appendix: Dimension of Approach (not included in your required pages)

Hot Tip: I evaluate based on three factors--

Presentation (is it laid out properly? does it use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation? etc.)

Argumentation (does it have an introduction, conclusion, flow of thought? etc.)

Content (does it cover the material required? is it the appropriate length? etc.)

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Road Rage...Air Rage...but...Grade Rage?

I have taught internet courses for years and have seen the incredible potential of this medium for delivering education to people all around the globe. I do this because I am a teacher: I desire to facilitate learning in my students, to turn them on to the Old Testament and provide them with enough foundational content and skill for a lifetime of discovery in the Bible. As a teacher, though, I see myself as a pastor-teacher, something that comes from my years in the pastorate. I love you all as my students and desire to see you grow in your faith and knowledge this semester.

At times I struggle with the cold, high tech medium of the internet. You have a picture of me, maybe have watched me on video or heard me on Real Audio, and receive written emails throughout our weeks together...but it is not as high touch as the classroom where we can look each other in the eye.

Part of my role as your pastor-teacher is to hone your skills and in order to do this I have been asked by the seminary to grade you. I take my role as evaluator very seriously, knowing that iron sharpens iron, that we need to know how we are progressing. Therefore, I will provide you with feedback at a few intervals throughout the semester. I will offer you reasons for the grades I give, but you need to know from the outset that I do this in the spirit of Eph 4:15: "speaking the truth in love" in order that "we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ".

When you receive a grade across the internet from an internet teacher you have never met it can be a bit of a shock if it is not an A+, especially when you have enjoyed incredible success as an engineer, doctor, minister or whatever else you are or have been doing to this point in life. In recent years grade expectations among university students has skyrocketed and this is

particularly noticeable among seminary students. I have given out "A"s, but must admit that these are not a dime a dozen and are reserved for those who go beyond the call of duty. The grade "C" is a solid grade, showing that you have completed the minimum as set out in the syllabus.

Here are some core values of the various types of assignments:

For the **discussions** I am concerned above all that you follow the guide in the Learning Modules in terms of the messages requested and the deadlines required. I will not usually mark your spelling and grammar (unless it is so sloppy that it is impeding communication). However, honor us by being thoughtful in your communication, but don't let this stifle your creativity, passion or ideas!

For all **written** assignments (Team Projects, Research Paper) I will mark you on the basis of your presentation, argumentation and content. This is not only a requirement in the academic world, but also in the business, government and ministry arenas where professionalism in writing is valued highly.

I do not compartmentalize life into academic versus ministry. I am in ministry in my church every week and in the classroom at my seminary. I expect excellence in both contexts and see them as an exercise of spiritual gifts. We are called to excellence as Christians and there is no area that should have a higher standard of excellence than the handling of God's word.

I do understand that you may have crises that happen in your life and please keep us informed about these so we can pray and take those into account in evaluation. However, I have discovered in teaching internet courses that some people can have a crisis a

week...so please ask your families, friends and congregations to be easy on you this semester! I appreciate the fact that you have joined me on this journey this semester and covenant with you to pray for your success and growth this semester.

Windows of Feedback

My commitment to you is to provide feedback at key junctures in the semester. After the Dimension of Depth: Approach section I will give you a "mini-feedback" on how your discussion contributions are doing. There will be no grade, but rather general comments on how you are doing and how you can improve. After the Dimension of Length: History I will evaluate the first team project and your discussions to that point in the semester. During the Dimension of Width: Literature you will be doing an in depth literary study of your independent research paper passage (either poetic or narrative). When this is completed, I will offer you some preliminary comments (no grade) on your work so you can make revisions for your final paper. After the Dimension of Width: Literature I will evaluate the second team project. Then at the end of the semester I will provide an evaluation of your discussion contributions for the second half of the semester and of your research paper. My hope is that this kind of evaluation will help you grow and show you the kind of values necessary for success in the course.

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Time Away

Let me explain something that is often an issue in classes of this kind. In a recent summer as I taught this internet course I was

travelling for 5 weeks in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, England, Italy and points in between. Even so I was never out of contact with OT520, that is the wonder of the Internet. As then I will be on the road from time to time this semester and as I am responsible to be in regular contact with OT520 during this time, so I want to be upfront with you all and tell you that I do hold students responsible for each week during the semester. In the past most students who have had to be away at certain points have worked ahead so that their material is on time and then have kept in touch through internet cafes while on the road so that their response material is not late. This is key for discussions which need to come in at the time we are dealing with the issues.

Certain weeks during the semester you are working on team projects and if your time away coincides with one of these weeks you can often work out a deal with your teammates on what part you will play in the team project (some people do the digging work, other people do the writing up, etc.). If you do plan on being away at some point you should look ahead in the course modules and see what we are doing that week. If you work ahead on the material and have things ready to go, all it will mean is a posting of your response and then getting on line to respond to others in the class.

Privacy

The code for this class and the discussion rooms and syllabus are for the private use of the students in this class. You should not give out the code or address to any other person. This ensures your privacy and mine.